

CHAPTER TWO

Bootle and Southport: Summer 1914 – Spring 1915

Introduction

A clear picture of the way the local communities committed to the War effort and identified with the local Battalion emerges through looking at three features from summer 1914 to early 1915. Firstly, an analysis of the economic and social nature of the communities of Bootle and Southport demonstrates that there were wide differences between the two principal feeder towns for 7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment. Secondly, the communities' reaction in these early months of the War was one of organisation, adaptation and support for the local Battalion and, in relation to the sinking of the **Lusitania**, sometimes taking positive action themselves. Thirdly, the embodiment of the locally raised Territorial Battalion, 7th King's, demonstrates the enthusiasm for recruitment and the relative breadth of its social composition.

In addressing the different demands of the War, part of these local communities remained on the Home Front and part were away fighting on the Western Front. For both elements, community identity was the key to maintaining the morale and enthusiasm of local troops and society involved in the early months of the War. The men who formed the Battalion may have come from disparate towns, but as far as they and their home communities were concerned, 7th King's was a single entity and this forms the paradox. The identification of two quite different areas with a single local Territorial Force Unit was of crucial importance in maintaining commitment to the War effort. The Unit belonged to these communities and they, in turn, owned it.

The recruiting ground for volunteers to 7th Battalion was diverse and if such diversity was represented amongst the recruits there might have been difficulties in moulding a successful and coherent combat effective Unit. Social, economic, religious and political differences could adversely affect the morale and discipline of the Battalion. Such factors are studied in relation to the Battalion's combat effectiveness in subsequent chapters. The pre-War disparities within and between the communities which the study will evidence also form an important contrast to the organisation and all-embracing commitment demonstrated by them from August 1914, as each came together in the War effort. The analysis of the role of women, especially in relation to the **Lusitania** disaster, demonstrates that they shared and even epitomised the community commitment to the War in 1915. The significance of the **Lusitania** disturbances lies in their spontaneity, in the involvement of women and in their role in

forging an identification with the War on Germany. This was mirrored at the Front by the action at Festubert which is examined in the following chapter. An important theme implicit in this chapter is the role and place of women, particularly in relation to their political activity, their employment and their leadership of the riots. It is a theme continued later in relation to the munitions industry and remembrance and memorialisation. Women might not have been able to fight but they identified with the community War effort spearheaded by the Battalion and their actions speak of full and shared community commitment to that effort.

The first few months of the War in Bootle and Southport saw a dramatic and almost frantic drive for funds, soldiers' comforts and recruitment. Local voluntary work and organisation of the Home Front was widespread, with a strong emphasis on maintaining links with the local soldiers. De Groot compared the enthusiastic volunteers who helped and organised the War effort amongst the rest of Society with the voluntary spirit to join the Army.¹ This range of activity settled to a more organised approach, with many agencies and committees being set up to tackle women's employment issues, relief, entertainment, billeting, recruiting and training. This demonstrated the early recognition of the need for an organised and coherent approach to the Home Front effort.

The social composition of the Territorials is relevant in terms of their culture.² Their friendlier, relaxed attitude and approach to discipline and army hierarchy was significantly different to the milieu of the Regular Army. The nature of the communities which made up the recruiting area for 7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment is therefore important as an indicator of that composition. Volunteers to the Battalion came from across the whole area, rooting the Battalion within the communities from where its activities were closely followed. It is not possible to define accurately the composition of the Battalion in the absence of attestation papers, but there is evidence, some of it anecdotal, that it fell across the social spectrum.³ The recruiting area contained two towns of quite diverse character both, to some extent, communities divided by politics, class, religion and economics but

¹ DeGroot *Blighty* p.64

² Fuller *Popular Culture and Troop Morale* p.42; Sheffield *Leadership in the trenches* p.14; Beckett, "The Territorial Force" p.148

³ Similar studies such as that of 6th and 10th King's Liverpool Battalions are not strictly relevant as they focus on Units of a specific character ie, the Rifles and the Scottish, rather than a more generic one, as was 7th: McCartney "The 1/6th and 1/10th Battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment in the period of the First World War"

both feeling they owned and were represented by the Battalion.⁴ Referring to the creation of 'service' battalions in county regiments, Grieves has commented that there was a 'remarkable symbiosis of voluntary recruiting and pride in the locality'.⁵ This description should be extended to include the recruitment within already constituted Territorial Battalions, such as 7th King's.

Having drawn some conclusions concerning its social composition the study of the Battalion continues with a brief appraisal of the months before they embarked for France. Thus far, the general experience of the Territorial volunteers in their periods of training has received little attention.⁶ It is clear from evidence here and that recorded by Generals who were faced with the new battalions reporting for duty, that it was limited and not directly relevant to the conditions and expectations of the War Front.

The traditional view of British society in 1914 has been of a divided country coming together with the onset of War, only for a gradually widening gulf to appear between the War and Home Fronts.⁷ This became what Hynes called the myth of the War, an unbridgeable gap between the two wartime worlds. This became an unassailable construct by the thirties, in writing and culture, and has endured to our own time.⁸ As Mitchinson commented, this myth can be found in learned studies and in poetry and prose alike.⁹ This perspective has been tempered by Bourne who felt that soldiers in France and Flanders were 'never entirely severed from civilian society'.¹⁰ This study establishes the nature of the communities at the declaration of War and in the months leading up to the physical separation of the soldiers from their home, in order to assess the extent and impact of the changes wrought by war. It will become

⁴ Walton *Lancashire* pp. 219, 226, 295 - 296

⁵ Grieves, K "There are times when we would all prefer the factory life': Letters from the trenches to the Shippam Works in Chichester during the First World War" in *Family and Community History Journal of the Family and Community Historical Research Society* Vol.6 No.1 May 1993 p.59

⁶ Most studies are of particular Units, for example, Morris' thesis on the Leeds Rifles. Notwithstanding references and comparisons in *Kitchener's Army* Simkins, Beckett's essay "The Territorial Force" in *A Nation in Arms* is one of the very few to focus on the Territorials as a whole.

⁷ RH Tawney in *The Nation* 21st October 1916; Fuller *Popular Culture and Troop Morale* pp. 157-158; De Groot expanded the theme to identify divisions between men and women, economic winners and losers - *Blighty* pp. 70 - 73

⁸ Hynes *A war imagined* pp. ix, 116, 459

⁹ Mitchinson *Gentlemen and Officers* p.vi

¹⁰ Bourne "The British Working Man in Arms" in *Facing Armageddon* p.339

apparent that physical separation did not necessarily lessen the sense of belonging and ownership.

It has also been stated that the experience of the War revolved around establishing a sense of identity as a way of understanding what was being fought for, so it is important to monitor how that sense could alter through the experience of war.¹¹ Identity is, of course, multi-layered while being constructed largely out of dichotomous divisions: men and women; soldiers and non-combatants; politicians and people; workers and employers; Catholics and Protestants; residents and aliens. Emphasis on these identities in isolation builds separation and conflict. If we accept instead, as Joyce proposes, that the synergy linking these various identities maintained the community, then we can better understand the background from which the men in the Battalion came.¹² The relationship in Southport and Bootle between the soldiers and the community was a close one - reasonably so before the War, and increasingly so with the recruitment of local volunteers. The involvement and interest in and commitment to the War was high from the outset. This commitment was enshrined in the events of May 1915 - the sinking of the **Lusitania** and the battle of Festubert - which built on the foundations of the shared sense of identity felt by soldiers and local communities.

Pre-War economy and society

Earlier writers have shown the importance of the social cohesion of army units in relation to their battle effectiveness.¹³ In proposing that the composition of this Battalion reflected to a fair extent the social and economic diversity of the society from which it drew recruits, this study suggests the 7th King's provides an interesting example of cohesion and effectiveness despite, or because of, this background of diversity. The study further suggests that an important aspect to this collectiveness was the community identity which the Battalion felt which overcame any social or other differences which in other circumstances would have hampered such cohesion. The activities of the Home Front similarly demonstrated the shift towards an

¹¹ Coetzee and Shevin-Coetzee *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* p. xi; Leed *No Man's Land*

¹² Joyce *Visions of the people* pp.11-12

¹³ Baynes *Morale* pp. 103-104; Fuller *Popular culture and troop morale* p.160; Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* pp. 51-52

acceptance of 'total war' and the forging of a more holistic 'wartime identity' even in places which had hitherto been extremely diverse.

In Lancashire in the summer of 1914 labour, women and Ireland were key areas of tension. Strikes were prevalent in a range of industries which would soon be connected with munitions. As well as women being involved in strike action, suffrage was an issue, particularly in Southport. In sectarian Bootle there was considerable interest in political events in Ireland. However, the Declaration of War soon brought those diverse aspects of society into a more cohesive whole. In the first few months from the outbreak of War, the local communities organised recruitment, funds, billeting, nursing and convalescent resources, and developed a sense of belonging which focused from an early stage on the common factor of 7th Battalion.

The 7th King's were recruited mainly from the coastal region of south west Lancashire from the area between Southport and Bootle along the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.¹⁴ The 1911 Census showing population, occupations and other socio-economic data in this region demonstrates the differences between the areas of Bootle and Litherland which is closer to Liverpool and Southport and Formby around the coast.¹⁵ Details are presented in Tables One p.232, Two p.232, Three p.233 and Four p.234 in the Appendix. Bootle is seen to have been generally working class with high proportions of immigrants, high Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) and considerable overcrowding. Bootle had the highest proportion of Irish immigrants (4,687) and the fourth highest proportion of Scottish immigrants (2,049) in the country. This compared with 723 Scots and 828 Irish in Southport.¹⁶ With 2.9% of the population being Scottish and 6.7% Irish, there was a direct effect, particularly in terms of the religious and political affiliations with which the troops would identify. Liverpool's sectarianism had often spilled over into Bootle and street clashes continued up to 1914 and beyond.¹⁷

¹⁴ 356 WES/56 WLTAf Minutes 2nd July 1913

¹⁵ Outside the urban areas, Sefton RDC included the parishes of Aintree, Croxteth Park, Ford, Ince Blundell, Kirkby, Lunt, Netherton, Sefton, Thornton and West Derby Rural. West Lancashire RDC included the parishes of Altcar, Aughton, Bickerstaffe, Bispham, Downholland, Halsall, Hesketh, Lydiate, Maghull, Melling, North Meols, Rufford, Scarisbrick, Simonswood and Tarleton - Census of England and Wales 1911, 10 Edward 7 and 1 George 5, Ch. 27 - County of Lancaster: Tables extracted from Vols. I-XI of the Report on the Census of England and Wales 1911 HMSO London 1914 (hereafter 1911 Census)

¹⁶ 1911 Census Volume IX – Birthplaces Table 2

¹⁷ Neal, F *Sectarian Violence: the Liverpool Experience 1819 – 1914. An aspect of Anglo-Irish history* Manchester University Press Manchester 1988 p.243

Amongst the overcrowded tenements and courtyard houses or 'slums',¹⁸ Bootle's IMR was one of the highest in the country in the early 1900s.¹⁹ Even by 1915 it was 142 per 1000 live births while Southport's was 90.²⁰ Claims for outdoor poor relief in the 1919 Medical Officer's Report for Bootle shows the number claiming relief in 1914 was 1,464 and in 1915 was 1,120.²¹ In Southport it had been 334 and 251 respectively, demonstrating a marked difference.²² The drop in both towns between 1914 and 1915 was probably associated with recruitment to the Army, reflecting Ferguson's view that one factor among many behind volunteering was a man's poverty.²³

As can be seen in Table Four p.234, work in 1911 in 'Brutal Bootle'²⁴ was largely dominated by the docks, engineering and construction. The extent of industrialisation in the small area away from the docks was evident from Siegfried Sassoon's account of the industrial area around the Litherland Training Camp with Bryant's match factory and Brotherton's explosives factory a few hundred yards from the Camp.²⁵ For women, in Bootle and Litherland, outside of domestic service, their main areas of employment were explosives, tanning and textiles. These were large scale factory concerns already employing more women than men. Figures provided by the Medical Officer of Health in 1913, and copied in Table Six p.235, emphasised that whole industries were dominated by one gender or the other. When the number of working men available was reduced by the call to arms, this had an important effect on those male-dominated industries.

Southport, Waterloo, Formby and Great Crosby were more affluent areas than those around Bootle described above. This is partly indicated by the imbalance of women over men, and particularly the higher numbers of unmarried and independent women. (See Table Three p.233). Employment figures show that there were a large

¹⁸ 1911 Census Tables 27, 27a, 29

¹⁹ B/MO 6 Bootle Borough Council Medical Officer of Health Report 1916

²⁰ Southport Borough Council Medical Officer of Health Report 1915; B/MO 8 Bootle Borough Council Medical Officer of Health Report 1919. The IMR also fluctuated considerably from ward to ward in Bootle, with one ward, Mersey, having an IMR in 1913 of 199 representing 20% of all children dying in their first year: B/36 Bootle Borough Council Minutes Vol.XXXVII Medical Officer of Health Report 1919-20

²¹ Bootle Borough Council Medical Officer of Health Report 1919

²² Southport Borough Council Medical Officer of Health Report 1915

²³ Ferguson *The pity of war* p.206; Morris "The Leeds Rifles" p.314

²⁴ Waller *Democracy and Sectarianism* p.94

²⁵ Sassoon p.381

number of female domestic servants in these areas. It is also clear from the statistics that Southport had a disproportionate number of middle aged and older people whereas in Bootle age groups were more evenly distributed.²⁶ The most immediate adverse effects of the Declaration of War on employment were felt in occupations such as confectionery, domestic service and dressmaking. Table Four p.234 shows these as the main sources of employment from Southport's women, where the high number of women in service reflected not just the affluence of families but also the number of hydropathic centres, hotels and private boarding houses. The enthusiasm for billeting troops was not unconnected to this drop in employment in these areas. For men, Southport's main areas of employment were in professional/medical/teaching, agriculture, engineering and construction, though the latter were small or family concerns compared with the large factory employment in Bootle.²⁷

There is some evidence of the physical health of Southport's potential volunteers to the Battalion. Details from the Southport Education Committee extracted in Table Seven p.236 show the average physiques of male fifteen year olds between 1908 and 1912.²⁸ These boys would have been the volunteers of 1914, a twenty-one year old showing up as being fifteen in the table for 1908. The statistics for the boys who were fifteen in 1912 and volunteering as seventeen and eighteen year olds in 1914 showed their physique was above the national averages.²⁹ Therefore the men who volunteered from Southport are likely to have come from a cohort who were of reasonable health, fitting Winter's theory that well paid manual workers and non-manual workers were the most likely to be healthy and therefore most likely to be accepted as volunteers for enlistment.³⁰

²⁶ 1911 Census Tables 5, 17,18, 23, 24, 25

²⁷ A report to the Southport Education Committee in 1914, from the Schools Medical Officer, listed the occupations of pupils' parents including 339 labourers, 156 gardeners, 132 painter and decorators, 110 joiners, 90 bricklayers, 89 charwomen, 73 tailors, 68 cabdrivers, 67 clerks, 42 farmers, 30 farm labourers, 50 working in the railways, 53 fishermen or shrimpers, 36 engineers and 46 mechanics: Southport Borough Council Education Committee 17th March 1915. A further report for the National Aid Committee in the last week of August 1914, to assess the impact of the War on different industries, showed an emphasis in similar occupation groupings, reproduced in Table Five p.235.

²⁸ Southport Borough Council Education Committee Annual Reports, Table E, 1911-15

²⁹ For instance, a fourteen year old boy who would be eighteen in 1914, was 4ft. 11in. and 6st.6lbs in 1910, when a national standards table had a similar child at 4ft. 9in. and 6st., suggesting that Southport children were above the national indicative standards: Southport Borough Council Education Committee Minutes Annual Report 1911

³⁰ Winter, J *The Great War and the British People* p.50

With little sign of the co-operation which was to come, this pre-War society was also marked by conflict within the communities, primarily of an industrial nature. The Southport Water Carnival in July 1914 sparked an apprentice boys' strike at the Vulcan Motor Works when over 150 boys missed work to attend the opening of the bathing lake and were told they would have their indentures revoked. The apprentices returned to work after a week³¹ but lost their bonuses as a result and these were not re-instated until September, perhaps as an inducement not to join the flood of recruits to the Army.³²

In a more serious strike, further indicating tension right up until the beginning of the War, thousands of men downed tools on the docks on 13th July in a demand for a standard wage rate. *The Bootle Times* reported that initially two-thirds of the 3,000 Union members had answered the strike call, but that many returned to work either that first day or over the week.³³ Two weeks into the strike, the dockers marched through Liverpool as the Strike Committee pledged to win and 'damn the consequences' but, like others across the country, the strike faded into insignificance in the face of the European War and was ended within a fortnight.³⁴

Southport's tradition of a forthright liberal and reforming middle class coupled with a high population of single women meant there were branches of the two main suffrage organisations, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Their activities had ranged from open air meetings in parks or on the sands to a number of violent incidents including disruption of Churchill's visit to Southport in 1910 and the burning of a shelter on the pier to mark the visit of the King and Queen in 1913.³⁵ Women showed that they were also industrially militant when a strike of laundry girls started on Thursday 16th July 1914 across Bootle, Blundellsands, Waterloo and Seaforth, in a campaign for shorter hours, higher pay and a half day on Saturdays. Up to 1,200 marched from the Custom House in Liverpool to Blundellsands and were able to stop girls working along the route through Bootle.³⁶ Earlier in July a tanners' strike over pay, which began in Warrington, spread to the Bootle district where, despite work

³¹ *Southport Visiter* 25th July 1914 p.7

³² *Southport Guardian* 16th September 1914 p.3

³³ *Bootle Times* 17th July 1914 p.11

³⁴ *Bootle Times* 31st July 1914 pp.5 and 6; 7th August p.5 and 14th August 1914 p.5

³⁵ *Votes for Women: The events on Merseyside 1870-1928* pp.57-59

³⁶ *Bootle Times* 17th July 1914 p.11

continuing at the Liverpool Tanning Company and Walkers' - both in Litherland - 300 workers were reckoned by the local Trades Council to be on strike.³⁷

Despite what today looks like the proximity of the War, the *Southport Visiter* did not consider the European situation worthy of comment until the end of July.³⁸ What was of interest, however, was the Irish Question. The *Southport Visiter* attacked the 'criminal' failure of the Prime Minister, Asquith, to deal with the issue. The newspaper's readers' support for the 'prosperous and enterprising community in the north-east of Ireland' who had been 'treated with contempt' by the Government, was apparently unstinting.³⁹ These arguments with the Government's policy were soon to be curtailed in the wider interest of the War effort.

In Bootle, the Irish debate was less theoretical and more concerned with actual division between Catholic and Protestant. Sunday 21st June 1914 had seen 4,000 Bootle Catholics take part in the annual procession through the town, though this was not as many as in previous years due to inclement weather.⁴⁰ Only a few weeks later the Orange Lodges held their annual 12th July demonstration at the Everton football ground, a huge event.⁴¹ The paper followed events in Ireland and the Commons debate, but rarely ventured into Editorial comment on the matter whereas the leading article of the *Southport Visiter* was keen to place Ireland in context: 'We may be in fact on the brink of the great war, the European Armageddon ... We have the Irish problem on our hands. Whatever happens now the Government have created a rebellious Ireland which will be a source of incalculable danger in case of an international war.'⁴²

Despite a series of industrial conflicts and other tensions within the local communities, there soon emerged a joint commitment by the communities of Southport and of Bootle to the War effort. Both areas exhibited a coming together of their community which began to focus on the volunteers to the local Battalion who would represent them at the Front. While Bootle and Southport did not have any real

³⁷ *Bootle Times* 3rd July 1914 p.11

³⁸ *Southport Visiter* 28th July 1914 p.8

³⁹ *Southport Visiter* 18th July 1914 p.8

⁴⁰ *Bootle Times* 26th June 1914 p.10

⁴¹ *Bootle Times* 17th July 1914 p.7

⁴² *Southport Visiter* 28th July 1914 p.8. Note this early use of the phrase 'the great war'.

sense of belonging to each other, they did develop a shared sense of identity and ownership with the same Territorial unit.

When the holiday atmosphere was broken by the enthusiastic, frenetic and disorganised preparations for War which went on in the autumn of 1914, there were signs of what previous commentators have highlighted as chaos, hysteria and confusion.⁴³ Ferguson's analysis injected anxiety and panic into this equation and sought to qualify the impression of mass enthusiasm.⁴⁴ The evidence from local newspapers offers limited support for this view. Voices in opposition were raised and reported but the overwhelming impression was one of excitement and expectation. Local agencies and community leaders took up the call for recruits, assistance and organisation. Politicians and churches joined with the general public in an attempt to take steps toward a coherent support mechanism.

By Friday 7th August Bootle Council had put provisions in place to support wives and families of recruited men. In a sign of the importance of the Territorials to local culture, prominent ratepayers in Waterloo founded a movement to encourage Territorial recruiting and Lord Derby called for men for the West Lancashire Terriers.⁴⁵ Southport's Liberal Association briefly declared themselves for neutrality, but offered full support to the Government three days later.⁴⁶ Crosby Hall, was opened up as a Red Cross collecting centre by the end of the week, as food prices started to rise in Southport.⁴⁷ The dock strike was settled within ten days as the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board withdrew notices and agreement was reached on overtime work to build and arm ships and to give a boost to local employment.⁴⁸ Ten days on and the national appeal for Territorials and for Kitchener men was underway, just as local papers reported that men in 7th Battalion were volunteering for active service.⁴⁹ Reactions ranged from the trivial to the practical. The Hesketh golf championships and Bootle Carnival were cancelled, but golf at Southport and

⁴³ Osborne, JM 'The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain 1914-16' in *Modern British History Vol.5* ed. P.Stansky and L. Hume Garland Publishing 1982; Reader, WJ 'At Duty's call': *A study in obsolete patriotism* Manchester University Press Manchester 1988

⁴⁴ Ferguson *The Pity of War* p.177

⁴⁵ *Bootle Times* 7th August 1914 p.7

⁴⁶ *Southport Guardian* 5th August 1914 p.9, 8th August 1914 p.6

⁴⁷ *Bootle Times* 7th August 1914 p.7, *Southport Guardian* 8th August 1914 p.8

⁴⁸ *Bootle Times* 7th August p.7 and 14th August 1914 p.5

⁴⁹ *Bootle Times* 14th August 1914 p.5

Ainsdale went ahead.⁵⁰ In Southport committees sprang up to raise money: the Mayoress' Auxiliary Ladies Committee, the Women's Liberal Association, the Birkdale Ladies Conservative Committee. In Bootle a sewing ladies network guild emerged.⁵¹ Crosby's Relief Committee was founded, recruiting centres established, first aid classes begun and a Voluntary Aid Detachment set up.⁵² Southport Trades Union Council held a march and rally and briefly declared it a 'class war'. The colours of the Bootle Battalion were lodged at the Town Hall as the BEF landed in France.⁵³

Behind this frantic and apparently disparate activity was a lot of hard work and quick decision-making, led primarily by the local Councils. As men volunteered, Councils agreed to pay allowances to dependents and to hold their positions open for the duration of the War, with a return with no loss of position 'if still capable of performing his duties'.⁵⁴ When the Government put Army pay into place, Councils simply began to agree to make up the difference between the salary currently commanded and service pay.⁵⁵ This willingness to pay was based on the notion that the War would be of limited duration. The shipping company, Cunard, followed suit, paying one full month's pay and half pay for three years, or for the remainder of the War, whichever was shorter. Employees other than clerical staff were treated slightly differently, with dependents being paid a weekly allowance of five shillings instead.⁵⁶

Committees were set up creating local versions of the national Prince of Wales Relief Fund, as well as local Civic Distress Committees.⁵⁷ Crucially, these Committees brought together different elements of the community, including representatives from the local Councils and also individuals who were already experienced in dealing with

⁵⁰ *Bootle Times* 7th August 1914 p.7; *Southport Guardian* 19th August 1914 p.5

⁵¹ *Southport Guardian* 19th August 1914 pp. 4 and 6; *Bootle Times* 14th August 1914 p.5

⁵² *Bootle Times* 7th August p.7; 21st August p.5 and 14th August 1914 p.5

⁵³ *Southport Guardian* 12th August 1914 p.3; *Bootle Times* 21st August 1914 p.5; *Southport Guardian* 19th August 1914 p.7

⁵⁴ Bootle Council Minutes Vol.XXXI 1913-14: Health Committee 10th August, Parks and Baths Committee 19th August, Electric Power and Lighting Committee 14th August, Sanitation Committee 18th August, Council 7th October 1914

⁵⁵ Bootle Council Minutes Vol.XXXI 1913-14: Council 7th October 1914; Waterloo and Seaforth Urban District Council Minutes Vol.20 1914-15: Council 14th September 1914

⁵⁶ B4/44 Cunard Board Executive Committee Minutes 3rd and 9th September 1914

⁵⁷ Bootle Council Minutes Vol.XXXI 1913-14: Council 2nd September 1914; Southport Council Minutes 1913-14: General Purposes Committee 6th August 1914; Litherland Urban District Council Minutes 7th September 1914; Waterloo and Seaforth Urban District Council Minutes 12th August 1914; UDFo 2/4/3 Formby Urban District Council Minutes 13th August 1914; *Bootle Times* 21st August 1914 p.5

distress from amongst local residents, philanthropists, the Local Education Authority, Boards of Guardians, employers and ladies organisations.

A key element in the reaction of the community was that of the trade unions and labour movement. Initial opposition was noted by Ferguson but it was to little effect.⁵⁸ Local evidence shows that representatives of the Left were anxious to be involved in the organisation of the home community from an early stage. The majority of organisations - the Councils, the clubs, the churches, the suffragists, the politicians - who all came to the fore with their views on the War and their efforts in aiding the effort were a cross-section of the voluntary and community minded middle class. With the sole exception of the trade union movement, the key organisations were drawn from the leaders of the local communities, perhaps unsurprisingly. Waites points to the rapid inclusion of representatives of the trade and labour movement in the organisation supporting the War as evidence of the social cohesion and political accommodation of the working class in society.⁵⁹ This was certainly the pattern in Southport, once the Trades Union Council had reversed its initial opposition to the War.

Southport Trades Union Council secured representations on what was to become the National Aid Committee, along with a long list of other local organisations including the Board of Guardians, the Insurance Committee, the Employers' and Traders' Association, the Company Housekeepers' Association, the Ladies Auxiliary, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association, the magistrates, the clergy, the Salvation Army and the press. They joined the Council's representatives of the Mayor, Mayoress, Deputy Mayor, Town Clerk, Borough Treasurer and Aldermen. Although the list of organisations was broad, representatives of labour and the 'ladies' were kept away from the more significant sub-committees dealing with finance and policy. They were involved on the Employment and Ladies' Auxiliary sub-committees, the latter being responsible for organising supplies and comforts for the troops, ambulance classes and nursing arrangements, and for investigating individual cases and reporting to and from the Case Committee.⁶⁰

There was a Joint Committee on Women's Employment but the Trades Council only had two seats on the Employment Committee and they complained in vain at the low

⁵⁸ Ferguson *The Pity of War* p.178

⁵⁹ Waites *A class society at War* pp. 186- 187

representation which labour was afforded on the Food Aid Committee and on the National Emergency Committee.⁶¹ At the Trades Council's Annual Meeting in February 1916, the Secretary reported on the previous year's activities and noted that representatives were on the National Aid Committee, 'but, of course, our representatives were elected onto committees which are of little importance.'⁶²

The changing circumstances of the War saw consolidation and co-operation as the disparate elements of the community came together to start to develop the Home Front. That coming together was, at first, somewhat random and unchannelled but in a very short time measures and agencies were in place to provide a more co-ordinated and coherent response. This was achieved despite the recent difficulties and differences within and between elements of the local community and it came to focus the War support on the efforts of the local volunteers who joined a range of service units, but predominantly the local 'Bootle/Southport Battalion.' While large numbers of men volunteered for active service, women were left with no immediate outlet for their response. They were unable to fight, so they directed their commitment into other supportive roles which were soon to become crucial for the maintenance of the War effort.

The experience of women

The single most identifiable group of non-combatants in the War were women and it is perhaps their level of commitment which most clearly demonstrates the extent of community identity shared with the troops abroad. Although women could be seen as a single group of the community, studies have also shown that they too consisted of a range of different identities and experiences within that broad gender grouping.⁶³ This study of the women in the local communities during 1914 and early 1915 shows that there were three main aspects to their role. Firstly, their involvement in organising material, financial and emotional support for the services; secondly, their position as dependants of men who had marched away; thirdly the nascent employment of women in traditional and non-traditional areas of work as a direct result of the War. Women experienced changes in status and employment almost

⁶⁰ Southport National Aid Committee Volume 1 Minutes 10th, 12th, 13th August 1914

⁶¹ *Southport Guardian* 5th September 1914 p.9, Southport National Aid Committee Volume 1 Minutes 14th August 1914

⁶² *Southport Guardian* 5th February 1916 p.9

⁶³ Woollacott *On her their lives depend* p.2

from the start of the War. However, with Southport's history of temperance and Bootle's notorious dependence on liquor in the docklands, there was also an undercurrent of concern in relation to sexual behaviour and drinking.

Local branches of the women's suffrage organisations followed the national lead in supporting the patriotic cause of the War. As Marwick noted, it was the suffragettes who 'outshone all others'.⁶⁴ The NUWSS deferred their suffrage campaign, and the WSPU, reflecting its increasingly Conservative membership,⁶⁵ became what Marwick called 'fervid' nationalists.⁶⁶ The Bootle Branch of the NUWSS agreed to give time, money and energy into co-operating with the relief societies, while the Conservative and Unionist Franchise Association and the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage agreed to suspend their political activities and work with the Soldiers and Sailors' Families Association.⁶⁷ The Church League for Women's Suffrage and the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage agreed to co-operate in organising a Women's Emergency Corps, along with the Women's Freedom League and the National Aid Corps.⁶⁸ In March 1915, the local Annual Meeting of the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) reported that so little activity had gone on in the last year due to their members working for other agencies in the War effort, that they could not formally align themselves with the Central Committee and had to set up an independent committee of NUWW instead.⁶⁹

In concentrating their efforts on comforts for the troops, women identified themselves or were encouraged to identify themselves with the troops, at first generally but very soon in terms of local men and the local Battalion. In this period of depoliticisation, the *Bootle Times* called on women to knit socks and weave body belts, as well as sending money, in the belief that such work by women of means would also assist in lifting other women out of impoverishment.⁷⁰ Traditional women's activities were called on in the mass campaign to clothe the troops. Sewing circles and networks were set up by political and religious groups. North Meols Women's Liberal

⁶⁴ Marwick *The Deluge* p.127

⁶⁵ Smith, HL *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* Longman London 1998 p.43

⁶⁶ Marwick *The Deluge* p.127

⁶⁷ *Bootle Times* 28th August 1914 p.5 *Southport Guardian* 26th August p.8; *Bootle Times* 4th September 1914 p.8

⁶⁸ *Bootle Times* 4th September 1914 p.8

⁶⁹ *Southport Guardian* 27th March 1915 p.9

⁷⁰ *Bootle Times* 16th October 1914 p.4

Association, the Southport and Birkdale Women's Unionists League, the Duke Street United Methodists Sewing Meeting - all keen and busy to do something.⁷¹ The War could not completely dampen the enthusiasm of the fashion editors who were of the opinion that this season's colours would be 'dreadnought grey, khaki and dark navy blue,' and who could hardly betray their glee that 'the War has put an end for ever to tango... so much the rage last year.'⁷² They failed to consider that the most prevalent colour of the seasons to come might be black.

Women were part of the drive for recruits, urging their men to fight, although this could be taken too far. At the annual meeting of the Southport Division of the Women's Liberal Association, the President castigated women who handed out white feathers to men in the street as a 'contemptible' act.⁷³ The other main role for women was in raising funds - the Women's Liberal Branch was to the fore in a savings campaign in Southport.⁷⁴ Flag days were also predominantly organised by and involved women, building on the already popular and effective Alexandra Rose Days. The question of wider participation was not so popular. When the Bootle Education Committee referred to legislation which established the Central Committee on Women's Employment as 'grandmotherly' they provoked a storm of protest from the local suffragists wondering what would have been called 'grandfatherly'? - 'Probably nothing! We are so accustomed to ineffective legislation that effective direct action is called grandmotherly!'⁷⁵ Depoliticisation did not mean that all tensions had evaporated.

By mid-December, Southport's Ladies Auxiliary Committee was successfully running five sub-committees. Most significantly, the Sewing Committee had sent nearly 21,000 garments to local men in the 7th Battalion, as well as to local Kitchener men. The Ambulance and Nursing Sub-Committee was holding classes and the Sub-Committees on Civil Distress and the Soldiers and Sailors' Families Association had raised money for local people.⁷⁶

⁷¹ *Southport Guardian* 2nd September 1914 p.3

⁷² *Southport Guardian* 2nd September 1914 p.2

⁷³ *Southport Guardian* 18th November 1914 p.3

⁷⁴ Braham, M *Southport Liberal Association - the first 100 years* M.Braham Southport 1985 p.33

⁷⁵ *Bootle Times* 16th October 1914 p.7

⁷⁶ Southport National Aid Committee Vol.1 Minutes 18th December 1914

Female employment, in part to relieve distress but also to fill gaps left by men, was soon an important issue for the local communities. Southport had a high number of dressmakers, milliners and confectioners and it was these industries, according to De Groot, which faced the most immediate redundancies as a result of the War crisis.⁷⁷ Braybon, too, identified areas for which Southport was well provided - domestic service, fish handling - as the first victims of unemployment.⁷⁸ It is unsurprising then that the Southport National Aid Committee did recognise the need to provide female employment to try and resolve some of these issues.

During September a Joint Sub Committee of the Employment Committee and the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee drafted proposals to treat women and girls who had been thrown out of employment due to a downturn in the economy and a Women's Employment Scheme was finally approved at the start of October.⁷⁹ The Scheme was not unlike the Queen's Work for Women Fund which ran in and around London for the female unemployed, replacing luxury goods that had become unavailable and the gap created by cutting off the German toy industry.⁸⁰ The Southport Scheme and the establishment of the Women's Employment Bureau proved very successful with up to thirty-nine women working in one week, principally making over 3,000 toys, and the Committee was able to report that there was scarcely any unemployment among women in the town as a result.⁸¹

Involvement in the range of 'nursing' services allowed women to participate actively in the War. They also participated directly through work in the munitions factories. This process represented as meaningful an identification with the War as could be expected by the civilian half of the community. The West Lancashire Territorial and Auxiliary Force (WLTAf) had set up a Voluntary Aid Committee in January 1910,⁸² and there was also a Nursing Services Committee run largely by women, albeit well-connected ones, including the Countess Derby and Mrs. Harvey Gibson. They had

⁷⁷ De Groot *Blighty* p.126

⁷⁸ Braybon, G *Women Workers in the First World War* Routledge London 1989 p.44`

⁷⁹ Southport National Aid Committee Vol.1 Minutes 1st October 1914

⁸⁰ Thom, D *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women workers in World War 1* I.B. Tauris London 1998 pp. 30, 86 and 115

⁸¹ Southport National Aid Committee Vol.1 Minutes 15th December 1914

⁸² The newly-established Committee included as Chairman, Lord Derby, then President of the St.John's Ambulance Association, (West Lancashire) and Chairman of the West Lancashire Territorial and Auxiliary Force Association, and Countess Derby, President of the Red Cross Society of West Lancashire: 356 WES 24/1 (64) West Lancashire Voluntary Aid Committee Minutes 27th January 1910

only recently enrolled 120 new nurses, although predictably the senior medical and military figures were men - (Professor) Lt.Colonel Harvey Gibson, Dr.Caton (Colonel), Lt.Colonel Burns Gemmell.⁸³ The nursing side was one area perceived as a clear role for women, both in providing the service and in running it. By mid-December 1914, a total of 3,785 cases had been admitted in the Western Command area.⁸⁴

Increasing numbers of wounded put pressure on beds and though 2,000 extra beds were being created as more hospitals were requisitioned, most were without nurses and equipment⁸⁵ The recruitment of more untrained nurses and VADs allowed trained nurses to go to the newer branch hospitals such as the several institutions in Southport.⁸⁶ By August 1915 the Committee reported that the VADs were fulfilling their roles in the hospitals satisfactorily and allowing trained nurses to be used more effectively.⁸⁷

By early 1915 women were therefore involved across a range of employment activities as well as working on comforts and support. In March 1915 the Southport NUWSS had one member nursing at the Grange, three in Women's Patrols, two teaching women on the Unemployment Scheme and one at the Front.⁸⁸ In June 1915 Litherland Council established a sub-committee to look at the provision of training in nursing for young women.⁸⁹ In April an appeal was made for women to register for work in munitions, clothing factories, agriculture, shop and clerical work⁹⁰ and it was reported that they were already being widely used in agriculture in the south west Lancashire area.⁹¹

⁸³ 356 WES 16/1 (48) WLTAf Nursing Services Committee Minutes 5th August 1914. Preparations for action had included practising transferring wounded men in and out of railway wagons but the Government-issue stretchers had to be abandoned because they would not fit through the doors of an ordinary railway carriage –356 WES 24/1 (64) West Lancashire Voluntary Aid Committee Minutes 7th January and 4th December 1911, and 2nd December 1913

⁸⁴ 356 16/1 (48) WLTAf Nursing Services Committee Minutes 16th December 1914

⁸⁵ 356 WES 16/1 (48) WLTAf Nursing Services Committee Minutes 21st October and 11th November 1914; 24th February 1915

⁸⁶ 356 WES 16/1 (48) WLTAf Nursing Services Committee Minutes 24th March; 14th April; 28th April 1915; *Southport Guardian* 2nd January 1915 p.8: these included the Hydropathic, the Homeopathic and the Isolation Hospitals

⁸⁷ 356 WES 16/1 (48) WLTAf Nursing Services Committee Minutes 11th August 1915

⁸⁸ *Southport Guardian* 24th March 1915 p.6

⁸⁹ LUD 7 Litherland Urban District Council Minutes 7th June 1915

⁹⁰ *Southport Guardian* 17th April 1915 p.9

⁹¹ *Southport Guardian* 21st April 1915 p.6

This increased involvement in wider society caused some concerns in certain quarters, primarily in terms of drinking and sexual behaviour. In relation to the campaign to blame the shell shortage on slack production caused by drink amongst the working classes, women were often the focus of attention more than men.⁹² The editor of the *Southport Guardian* called drunkenness amongst women a 'social menace'. His main concern was the leniency shown by magistrates in discharging seventeen of the forty-five women brought before the Bench in 1915.⁹³ Correspondents to the paper often blamed the problem on money being available all at once for work that had been done over a matter of weeks, although the drinking was only amongst 'a certain class' of Southport's women.⁹⁴ However, in his defence, the Chairman of the Magistrates said that total figures were down owing to the fact that many men had left the town.⁹⁵

In another example of double standards on gender issues, Southport saw debate about the behaviour of its young women when large numbers of troops were billeted in the town. The existing imbalance between the sexes was compounded by the recruitment drive and the influx of new troops. Local suffragist organisations called for patrols to safeguard girls and young women and to restrain their behaviour in these 'abnormal conditions'.⁹⁶ This demonstrated that middle-class women did as much as anyone to promote the fear of so-called 'khaki fever', the result of which was to encourage the establishment of patrols carried out by women to monitor other, usually younger and more working-class, women.⁹⁷ Requests for patrols were rejected by the local Watch Committee in November and December, and did not re-surface until Spring 1915.⁹⁸

It was assumed that the women, rather than the men of the Army, would be badly behaved and immoral. One letter to the newspaper from a serving Officer called on

⁹² De Groot *Blighty* p.75

⁹³ *Southport Guardian* 5th February 1916 p.6

⁹⁴ *Southport Guardian* 7th November 1914 p.3

⁹⁵ *Southport Guardian* 5th February 1916 p.8

⁹⁶ National circular of the NUWW in *Southport Guardian* 17th October 1914 p.7

⁹⁷ Woollacott, A "Khaki Fever" and its control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.29 1994 pp.325-347; Levine, P "Walking the Streets in a Way no Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War One' *Journal of Modern History* Vol.66 No.1 1994 pp. 34-78

⁹⁸ Southport Borough Council Watch Committee Vol. 1911-14, Minutes 13th November and 31st December 1914

the ladies who were supposed to uphold moral order, 'to turn their attention to knitting comforts'.⁹⁹ The military establishment saw the women as blameworthy and were keen to prevent the outbreak of problems which were associated with sexual immorality and which could weaken the men's army as a result - illegitimate babies and venereal disease being the prime concerns.¹⁰⁰

By late November the Southport League of Honour - a euphemism for women's patrols - could boast a membership of 900 with twenty enrolling officers,¹⁰¹ but the reaction of the Watch Committee in refusing to sanction the Patrols in 1914 had not altered by the end of 1915.¹⁰² While it is clear that patrolling was going on in Southport, the local establishment refused to alter its traditionally liberal position and to endorse such a 'moral crusade'. The local newspapers maintained an evenly balanced argument, but the overriding concern of the Police Force and the Watch Committee was to maintain control through the traditional methods and not by employing women in male occupations. There was, however, a more sinister side to the debate too. Simkins quotes Charles Cain, of the 2/5th Manchesters, billeted in Southport, as an example: 'The men I was with were rough with women, boasted of their conquests, many of whom were actually raped, but there were no prosecutions to my knowledge.' Cain also referred to a woman and her three teenage daughters who, putting up ten soldiers, all ended up 'in the family way'.¹⁰³

The evidence demonstrates that the woman's experience of the first nine months of the War was, inevitably, mixed. Women's organisations were running campaigns and women were represented on the many committees of organisations which were doing similar work. Not only is this significant in the context of the political mood of the time and the eventual, legislation on the extension of women's suffrage from municipal elections to national elections, but also in terms of the actual involvement of women, by choice, in the mechanism of War. Although direct employment for women did not rise perceptibly in the area, women were to the forefront of the support campaign for troops, in terms of both money and materials.¹⁰⁴ The one thing

⁹⁹ *Southport Guardian* 24th October 1914 p.7

¹⁰⁰ De Groot *Blighty* pp.232-5

¹⁰¹ *Southport Guardian* 28th November 1914 p.3

¹⁰² Southport Borough Council Watch Committee Vol.2 Minutes 23rd December 1915

¹⁰³ Simkins *Kitchener's Army* p175 quoting CA Cain, 'The Footsloggers', unpub. account, 1967 IWM, PP/MCR/48

¹⁰⁴ There were already high numbers of women employed in particular industries, such as matchmaking, which began to turn their attention to War-related production, including

which it was agreed women could not do, as the President of the Southport Women's Liberals had pointed out, was actually fight. The consensus that this was (and of course predominantly remains) culturally unacceptable lay behind the desire to be close to the men in khaki who represented the War directly in their vicinity. The question of a more direct involvement in the War, however, was already being answered as the female workforce in industries directly supplying the armaments grew. Furthermore, the need for some form of direct action by women was a contributory element in the rioting after the sinking of the **Lusitania**.¹⁰⁵

Unfairly, women were the subject of criticism. If there were any truth in the concern that drinking was having an effect on the munitions industry it was on the dockfront and in the factories where a reduction was most needed. Instead, the press campaign chose easy targets - women in particular - and as a result there is little evidence of any immediate or radical changes to behaviour. The answer to low production lay not in abstinence but in an increase in the labour force which could only come as more attention was paid to the introduction of women to the workforce in crucial industries. It is striking that both in relation to sexual behaviour and to drunkenness, it was women who were identified as being at prime fault. They were supposed to be the moral backbone of society and it was more shocking when they were found not to be complying with their gender role.

Social composition, recruitment and training the Battalion

The question of the social composition of the Battalion is a difficult one to answer with accuracy. This is largely due to the absence of any collection of attestation records which would give social and economic information about the recruits.¹⁰⁶ However, it is possible to work towards an understanding – or what Morris calls ‘an impression’¹⁰⁷ - of the social composition of the Battalion of pre-draft volunteers in three ways. Firstly, the geographic roots of the men can be established, leading to certain assumptions about their social position. Secondly, there is a range of

explosives and munitions, as shown by the 1911 Census.

¹⁰⁵ *Southport Guardian* 18th November 1914 p.3

¹⁰⁶ The recent availability of the Soldiers' Documents in the National Archives is a great advance, but the magnitude of a Battalion search is beyond the bounds of this thesis.

¹⁰⁷ In “The Leeds Rifles” p.323, Morris built a similar thesis regarding social composition in the Leeds Territorials based primarily on the occupation list of one Company and other impressionistic indicators. McCartney relied on a Draft Book and Casualty Books for her study of 1/10th and 1/6th King's Liverpool Regiment respectively

anecdotal evidence and comment about the nature of the recruits, which give a further indication of the Battalion's composition. Thirdly, there are numerous references to men's trades, commonly in short obituaries in the local newspapers. These all suggest that recruitment from Bootle was from across the working class but with many labourers and semi-skilled men whilst that from Southport was more mixed including more artisans and lower middle class recruits.

In addition to looking at these three features, this section examines the early days of the recruiting process in the locality demonstrating the enthusiasm and encouragement in the communities. The section concludes with an appraisal of the activities of the Battalion after it left the area for training and deployment on the south coast highlighting the importance of their local identity to maintaining morale.

Recruiting centres were set up across the area so that nowhere was overlooked. Ferguson established five motives in recruitment - successful recruiting techniques, female pressure, peer group pressure, economic motivation, and impulse.¹⁰⁸ Successful technique, peer pressure in the form of newspapers' rallying cries, and the best recruiting sergeant in Lord Derby, all meant that the battalions in and around Liverpool and south west Lancashire were well supported.¹⁰⁹ Liverpool was one of the recruiting centres set up by the Government for all units,¹¹⁰ but Southport, and Bootle with the Battalion Headquarters in Park Street, were associated directly with the Territorial Force. When Arthur Critchley arrived at Park Street, Bootle, 'everyone' was already there and they had to sleep on the floor of the nearby Balliol Road School.¹¹¹ Southport Council agreed to the use of the old Education offices in the Cambridge Arcade for a recruiting office¹¹² while Waterloo set up a Recruiting Committee of the Council.¹¹³

The 7th Battalion already had companies based in different towns. The pre-War Force had eight companies, lettered A-H, which were merged on mobilisation to conform to the Regular pattern of A-D. Companies A-C were based in Liverpool, D

¹⁰⁸ Ferguson *Pity of War* pp.205-7

¹⁰⁹ Grieves, K *The Politics of Manpower 1914-18* Manchester University Press Manchester 1988

¹¹⁰ Osborne "The Voluntary Recruiting Movement"

¹¹¹ Critchley

¹¹² Southport Borough Council Minute Book 1913-14, Council Minutes 11th August 1914

¹¹³ Waterloo with Seaforth Urban District Council Minutes Vol.20 1914-15, Council Minutes 6th August 1914

and E in Bootle and F,G and H respectively in Formby, Crosby and Southport.¹¹⁴ Evidence of casualties from the first attacks at Festubert, which were led by A and B Companies, suggests they were the Southport/Formby group, while the C and D Companies appear to have been more from Bootle, although there is sufficient intermingling to believe that companies were not exclusive in this respect.¹¹⁵

An analysis of 7th King's records in *Soldiers Died*¹¹⁶ shows that more men from Bootle were killed than from Southport - 156:107.¹¹⁷ Large numbers of deaths from Litherland, Waterloo, Formby, Great Crosby and Birkdale were also recorded. This ratio of deaths from the two main centres of 60% to 40% compares directly with the total male populations in 1911 of 25,958 (Bootle) and 17,228 (Southport).¹¹⁸ This would indicate that, in terms solely of this Battalion, both communities suffered losses proportionate to their population and therefore in all probability a similar proportion of men volunteered from both communities for the three Line Battalions.¹¹⁹

The number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) appears to further indicate the social differences between the two communities as the figures are not in the same proportions as the population figures.¹²⁰ Indeed, Southport and Bootle had similar numbers of Corporals, Lance Corporals and Sergeants. If taken in conjunction with the 60:40 split between Southport and Bootle, this would suggest that slightly more NCOs proportionately came from Southport. This might be a reflection of the balance of classes between the communities, with Southport's more affluent community providing more artisans and lower middle class recruits, the groups most likely to provide NCOs, than Bootle.

¹¹⁴ Richards, W *His Majesty's Territorial Army: A descriptive account of the Yeomanry, Artillery, Engineers and Infantry with the Army Service and Medical Corps, comprising "The King's Imperial Army of the Second Line"* Vol. II Virtue & Co. London [c. 1910]

¹¹⁵ Details of the battle of Festubert can be found in the following chapter but there is no evidence at any stage that A and B Companies were chosen for the night attack because of any superior or inferior ability when compared with C and D Companies. Morris believed the Leeds Rifles were reorganised on the basis of the seniority of the existing Company commanders: Morris "The Leeds Rifles" pp.378 - 379

¹¹⁶ *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-19: Part 13-The King's (Liverpool Regiment)* JB Hayward & Son Polstead 1989 (hereafter *Soldiers Died*) pp. 48 - 58

¹¹⁷ Beckett used *Soldiers Died* for a similar analysis looking at dilution of Territorial Battalions in "The Territorial Force" p.147

¹¹⁸ Census 1911

¹¹⁹ Volunteers from these geographical areas also joined other Battalions, including other local Regiments, the Territorial artillery and Transport Columns, and for other Regiments around the country. This was widely reflected in the names and Units recorded later on War memorials.

¹²⁰ *Soldiers Died* pp. 48 - 58

A number of writers have noted that the predominant group of men in the Territorial Force were lower middle and respectable working class.¹²¹ This describes many of the men from Southport and McCartney confirmed that 5th, 7th and 9th King's Battalions all attracted these artisans.¹²² Bootle's population was predominantly working or lower working class so recruitment from there could be expected to be overwhelmingly working class but it is unclear if recruits came from the full range of working and under class including the casual workers and unemployed. The *Bootle Times* stressed the huge level of commitment shown by the 'working classes' already to the War effort, though the unionised workers referred to were more likely to be upper working class. According to the newspaper, Merseyside had contributed 18,000 men for active service, with 6,000 from the National Union of Dock Labourers and Riverside Workers and 5,000 from the Sailors and Firemen's Unions. If the stewards on Atlantic transports were added, this figure rose to 25,000.¹²³

There is some anecdotal evidence of the socio-economic position of recruits in the Battalion. After the War the WLTAf discussed reductions to the number of Battalions it could sustain and a strong case was made for keeping the 6th Battalion as it attracted the 'best sort of fellows' and had a history as a 'class battalion'. The minute went on to report that a similar standard of men were attracted from Crosby and Southport to the 7th Battalion, 'but in Bootle they got the ordinary sort of Territorial'.¹²⁴ Their own Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Marriott, wrote home in early 1916, reflecting on the men of the Battalion coming from the 'slums of Bootle'.¹²⁵

The Battalion also appears to have reflected the immigrant population of Bootle in particular. A relatively casual study of *Soldiers Died* on the basis of Celtic surnames suggests up to 10% of the Battalion were Irish, Scots or Welsh, though it is not clear if they were first or second generation migrants. Census figures for Bootle quoted earlier had shown levels of 2.9% Scots and 6.7% Irish. The higher levels of recruitment implied by surnames, especially in the context of the attraction of Liverpool's ethnic Battalions – the 8th Irish and 10th Scottish – could suggest a more

¹²¹ Beckett "The Territorial Force" p.145; Sheffield *Leadership in the trenches* p.14; Mitchinson *Gentlemen and Officers* p.21

¹²² McCartney "1/6th and 1/10th Battalions of the King's Liverpool Regiment in the period of the First World War" p.27

¹²³ *Bootle Times* 30th October 1914 p.5

¹²⁴ WES/1 1/1(1) WLTAf Minutes 7th June 1921

fervent commitment to the War than amongst the English. In the light of Ferguson's comment noted earlier, it was more likely that these were economic migrants who had the least to leave behind in their casual dockland employment.

In addition to geographic and anecdotal references there is evidence of the men's occupations and backgrounds, albeit inconsistent and unscientific. An analysis of newspaper obituaries for men from Southport has revealed information about the occupations of 54 Other Ranks.¹²⁶ This shows that the men joining 7th King's in Southport were drawn from the artisans, upper working class and lower middle classes of occupations found in the Census and other occupational tables referred to earlier. There were shop assistants, bank clerks, printing workers, Council staff, builders, insurance agents, railway workers, plasterers, gardeners, painters and decorators, porters, cabinet makers, postal workers, tailors, teachers, employees from Vulcan engineering works, florists, butchers and the odd footballer. A further eleven volunteers were listed as drivers or conductors from the Borough's Tramways Department.¹²⁷ The Officers were graduates, solicitors, architects and in one case the director of the family business. The analysis is patchy as the potted biographies that accompanied grainy photographs of the volunteers did not always refer to their occupations. Indeed, some were still too young to be called anything at all.

A study of casualties reported in the *Bootle Times* in 1915 has given occupations for 60 men. These have included workers on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, the Diamond Match Works, the White Star Line, Harland and Woolf, the police, Bootle Corporation, plumbers, engineers, a number of apprentices, and forty men from the Liverpool Tanning Company in Litherland.¹²⁸ The *Bootle Times* reported that many men had joined the Battalion from the Bootle Tanning Works too.¹²⁹ Cunard noted that a large number of clerical workers had joined the local Territorial Battalions.¹³⁰ Random checks of newspaper reports on casualties from both communities throughout the War have not revealed any discrepancy with the above findings.

¹²⁵ Marriott correspondence 20th April 1916

¹²⁶ *Southport's Splendid Hearts: A tribute to the men of Southport who gave their lives in the Great War* compiled by V. Bannister Watkinson & Bond Ltd. Southport 2002

¹²⁷ *Southport Guardian* 28th April 1915 p.9

¹²⁸ *Bootle Times* 1915: 28th May p.7; 4th June p.5, 6 and 7; 11th June p.5; 18th June p. 6 and 10; 26th June p.7 2nd July p.7; 31st December p.3

¹²⁹ *Bootle Times* 7th December 1917 p.3

¹³⁰ PLOC 4.321 LIVKR 1995.1.3 Cunard Clerical Staff Record [c. 1915]

Study of selected Soldiers' Documents at the National Archives has revealed that some forms recorded occupations while others did not.¹³¹

However, the main occupational group found in Bootle according to the Census of 1911, but not highly represented in available records, were the dockyard workers. They do seem to have been amongst the ranks for Divisional General Jeudwine later wrote that his troops were recruited from the 'warehouse, office and docklands of our town'.¹³² These particular workers may have joined other units in the area but reports of casualties from other units similarly do not list dock labourers amongst their number. Possibly the families of workers on the docks, from the slums of the dockfront, did not engage with the local newspapers to give the extensive information which was collated for other classes. It is also clear from the newspapers' reports of casualties that large numbers of men were reported killed or wounded but no reference to their occupational status was given, for whatever reason.

Although much of the Battalion was recruited from the local community in the weeks following the Declaration of War, a reasonable number of men were pre-War Territorials. They had been at the annual camp in Westmorland when War was declared and local newspapers reported their activities, demonstrating the attachment between the Battalion and the community. The *Bootle Times* noted that it was expected that 'all ranks [would] uphold the good name of the battalion as in previous years by working with zeal and being exemplary in conduct in and out of the camp'.¹³³ The *Southport Visiter*, reporting on the 72 men of the Southport and Formby companies, recorded names of men which recur over the subsequent four years of war:

Lieutenants Tweedale, Pittendrigh, Shaw and Roper, along with Sergeant-Instructor Carr, Sergeants Lee and Groves, Machine Gun Sergeant Hines and Corporal Hunt.¹³⁴

Based on pre-War recruitment figures and known numbers of between 651 in 6th King's Battalion and 700 in 10th King's, the indications are that 1/7th Battalion

¹³¹ WO 363 Service Records. For example, 2107 Private Lappin was a clerk from Kirkdale and 2087 Sergeant Beveridge was a wireworker from Bootle; but 4461 Private Abbot and 6111 Private Ackers, from Formby and Birkdale respectively, had no occupation noted.

¹³² 356 FIF/45 Letter from Jeudwine to Derby 28th August 1918 Jeudwine MSS

¹³³ *Bootle Times* 24th July 1914 p.7

¹³⁴ *Southport Visiter* 4th August 1914 p.6

complement on the eve of the War was no more than 700 men.¹³⁵ Despite the contract of a Territorial for Home defence, the crisis called for men to go overseas. On 11th August the Battalion at Bootle was asked for volunteers for 'foreign service', with the undecided allowed leave to discuss it with their families. The whole of the Southport contingent, bar one, had volunteered, according to the *Southport Visiter*.¹³⁶ It was reported on 29th August that all officers and 850 men had volunteered for foreign service, and a further 200 were now needed to make up a full Battalion.¹³⁷ The Bootle paper reported that the 'Bootle Battalion' (sic) had all similarly volunteered.¹³⁸ By 10th September, applications for foreign service had been closed and recruits were being taken on for a Second Line Battalion. Advertisements were printed every day calling for men for this 2/7th Battalion, as well as for Kitchener's Battalion, for all branches of the Army, for the Special Reserve and for Special Constables.¹³⁹ Undoubtedly numbers of recruits were high for a considerable time, urged on by the competitive figures given in the press, but it is a little difficult to accept the reports that crowds of youths were reporting to join Kitchener's Army at a rate of forty or fifty per day.¹⁴⁰

Kitchener's concern about the limited fighting potential of the Territorials is well documented and can perhaps be summed up in Beckett's words as 'an instinctive one for a regular soldier'.¹⁴¹ There is no evidence that the use of some Territorial units as early as the Autumn meant his view had changed but it did not take long for him to have to use the organisation to assist with recruiting his New Armies and to appeal directly to the Territorials to enlist for foreign service.¹⁴² The Territorial Force also made its own appeals, with direct personal calls from Lord Derby himself. As a key figure in national recruiting Derby was also instrumental in the establishment of the Pals movement in Liverpool, and men of the town were reported to be flocking to join this 11th (Service) Battalion of the King's Regiment, encouraged by calls from the

¹³⁵ 356 WES/56 WLTAf Recruiting and Discharge Committee Minutes 26th June 1912; 5th March 1913; 27th May 1914, WES 356/4/1(21) WLTAf Clothing Committee Minutes 25 February 1913

¹³⁶ *Southport Visiter* 13th August 1914 p.6

¹³⁷ *Southport Guardian* 29th August p.6; 2nd September 1914 p.3

¹³⁸ *Bootle Times* 14th August 1914 p.4

¹³⁹ *Bootle Times* 28th August and 11th September 1914

¹⁴⁰ *Southport Guardian* 2nd September 1914 p.6; *Southport Guardian* 5th September 1914 p.6

¹⁴¹ Beckett "The Territorial Force" p.131

¹⁴² *Bootle Times* 14th August 1914 p.3

mayor of Southport.¹⁴³ Such duplication of effort could have been damaging - as Beckett suggests¹⁴⁴ - but appears not to have been too problematic in the case of 7th Battalion, which raised three lines despite competition from so many other locally-based units.

Keen to encourage recruitment in the local Battalion, the Southport papers were full of pictures and reports of men who had volunteered. They were, perhaps, unfortunately over-eager when several from the same family joined up, fathers and sons, uncles, as well as brothers in arms. The creation of a Roll of Honour in the *Southport Guardian* was further encouragement, along with lists of men from the same workplace or sports club.¹⁴⁵ This was some time before the term 'Roll of Honour' acquired the definition we know it by today, and was simply a roll of those who had volunteered to take up arms.¹⁴⁶ When the Roll was updated in the New Year the editor wrote: 'Never before in the history of the country has a war come home so closely to the people. The effect of the Territorial Force being embodied in the Regular Army is to find almost every household represented in the ranks.'¹⁴⁷

The *Formby Times* was also an enthusiastic recruiter, printing names and photographs, and helping to forge a community spirit. The *Bootle Times* did not print the lists of men or the local names and pages dotted with photographs which appear elsewhere. This does not seem to have unduly affected the figures for recruiting in Bootle or the south of the area in question but there was a noticeable difference in approach. On 21st August, the *Bootle Times* reported that 180 men had volunteered at Bootle, although a number had been rejected due to bad teeth.¹⁴⁸ By the end of August, however, it seemed not everyone was rushing to join as perhaps they should. Reference was made to people who would join up, were it not for the meagre allowances paid to dependants and calling on the Government to increase the separation allowance.¹⁴⁹ The *Bootle Times* also urged recruitment from all sections of

¹⁴³ *Bootle Times* 7th August 1914 p.7, *Southport Guardian* 19th August p.4; 26th August p.6; 5th September 1914 p.7

¹⁴⁴ Beckett "The Territorial Force" p.132

¹⁴⁵ A Roll of Honour of Southport's Rugby Union Football Club appeared in the *Southport Guardian* 23rd January 1915 p.2

¹⁴⁶ *Southport Guardian* 29th August 1914 p.11

¹⁴⁷ *Southport Guardian* 9th January 1915 p.4

¹⁴⁸ *Bootle Times* 21st August 1914 p.8

¹⁴⁹ *Bootle Times* 28th August 1914, p.4

the community, noting: 'If a clerk is as good a man as a docker let them fight side by side...this is no time for class distinction'.¹⁵⁰

After another push for volunteers for 2/7th Battalion numbers rose at Headquarters. In the week ending 4th September 325 men attested at Seaforth Barracks, but the following week 95 turned up on Monday alone. This was followed by forty-five on Tuesday, thirty-six Wednesday, thirty-six Thursday, seventeen Friday and eleven on Saturday, indicating a drop in enthusiasm, although the paper had previously pointed out that a number were joining the Pals. To try to limit the huge numbers of recruits, physical requirements were increased a little to a 35 inch chest and 5ft 6ins. in height, though it was expected that these would be slackened shortly. In a further sign that dockworkers were amongst the ranks, a sub-recruiting office was also opened at the Canada Dock.¹⁵¹

At the end of September, with around 400 local men in the Battalion, the Southport contingent marched or were driven to Headquarters at Bootle, and 100 of these went straight to Romsey to join up with the main element of the Battalion who were already there. Critchley recalled that he was digging ditches on Lord Derby's Knowsley estate, before heading for Romsey.¹⁵² The *Southport Guardian* commented that the men had been promised they would stay together and would be allowed some choice in which Section they joined, along the idea of the Pals Battalions.¹⁵³ A later press report showed that the papers had been a little over-enthusiastic about numbers in the Battalion. When numbers in the 7th Battalion reached 1,000 men and thirty-five Officers, it was reported that this included 300 Southport men 'who had taken the place of the original ones who were unfit or unable to do foreign service.'¹⁵⁴ It seems that this 300 was the number of recruits in September, but it did not include the Southport men who were already in the Territorial Battalion before War broke out.

Giving impetus to the sense of regional identity, this first wave of volunteers were soon billeted on the south coast where 700 Kingsmen joined soldiers from all around Lancashire. Private Phillips wrote that the weather was hot, the people kind and that

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Bootle Times* 18th September 1914 p.5, 11th September 1914 p.5

¹⁵² Critchley

¹⁵³ *Southport Guardian* 30th September 1914 p.4

¹⁵⁴ *Southport Guardian* 14th October 1914 p.4

they were staying in large houses along the seafront.¹⁵⁵ The *Bootle Times'* sports pages reported from Southampton, where D Company was at the Dock Station in October 1914. A football encounter with St.Dennis Argyle had left Argyle 'routed with the terrible loss of 12 goals to 1'. The trench humour - and sporting entertainments - which they would have to rely on in France was much in evidence in Corporal Stanley's review of the game. The enemy's citadel was bombarded, there was quick firing, the 7th would not be driven out of enemy territory, there were fierce attacks on their front line, backed by their rearguard, and when the order came to cease firing, D Company had won their first action 12-1!¹⁵⁶

Messages home from 2390 Private Jack Fearnhead, A Company, in Romsey showed that the Battalion was due to move to Sevenoaks on 18th October. After ten days there, they were sent on to Canterbury, where they were in their first beds for three months.¹⁵⁷

Recruiting work by local organisations, by the newspapers and by rallies and meetings, continued throughout the Autumn. Working on garments and comforts was to encourage local involvement in recruiting as much as to ease the life of the soldiers who received them. Crosby Urban District Council even persuaded its Councillors to send cigarettes to G Company, out of their own pockets.¹⁵⁸ While the Mayor of Bootle and newspaper advertisements called for recruits for a third, reserve, for the 7th Battalion, local Bootle MP and Leader of the Conservative Party, Andrew Bonar Law, addressed a huge recruiting meeting with Lord Derby at the Metropole in Liverpool, which the *Bootle Times* reported verbatim.¹⁵⁹

As the Battalion was on call for the defence of London over Christmas leave was cancelled, unlike Kitchener's and Home Service men.¹⁶⁰ Nonetheless, letters published in the local newspapers were designed to keep spirits up. They had a 'splendid Christmas' at Canterbury. After a route march on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day was given off and Christmas dinner was eaten on Boxing Day with each Company dining as a Unit (the author's Company ate along with G Company - one of

¹⁵⁵ *Southport Guardian* 3rd October 1914 p.3

¹⁵⁶ *Bootle Times* 9th October 1914 p.6

¹⁵⁷ Jack Fearnhead correspondence 17th October 1914, 6th November 1914, 22nd November 1914

¹⁵⁸ *Bootle Times* 18th September 1914 p.5

¹⁵⁹ *Bootle Times* 4th December p.6; 18th December p.5; 24th December p.4 1914

the Southport Companies) on turkey, pork, sausages, potatoes, ham, minerals for the teetotallers, beer, plum pudding, mince pies and crackers.¹⁶¹ Another letter from Bootle's Terriers in D Company, confirmed that it had been a good Christmas in Kent.¹⁶²

However much the good people of Kent enjoyed their Christmas, apparently they were not so enthusiastic about New Year, so the men of the King's showed them how it was done in Liverpool. Partying through the town in fancy dress, playing the drums and singing 'Tipperary' and 'La Marseillaise', they aroused the interest of the local police who persuaded them that they had partied enough and should head back to their billets. On the way to their billet they paused to wake the Officers, who were staying in a big hotel, with more singing and drumming, wished a happy New Year to the residents of the town so privileged to billet the 7th King's, crossed hands and sang 'Auld Lang Syne', 'Rule Britannia' and 'God save the King', and went to bed. 'The people here afterwards said they had never seen anything like it - and they seemed to mean it.'¹⁶³

It was important for the men to retain the link with home and the editors used these 'public interest' stories to keep up the recruitment campaign. Jack Fearnhead was less enthused with the positive and rather light-hearted activities, complaining that many of the presents and post for 7th Battalion had gone to the MOB's at Blackpool - 'Mother's Own Boys', that is, Home Service men. When enquiries were made it caused some disturbance, even though the Quartermaster hushed it up.¹⁶⁴ Nor was the *Bootle Times* shy of reporting some of the bad news too. With no leave over Christmas, New Year leave was then refused to any men who would not agree to be inoculated and there was uproar amongst men and their families. Vaccination had always been a contentious issue for the working classes. Letters complained about the issue and when it seemed that some men may be due home the following weekend, the Editor showed that the interests of the local lads were better served by having leave than by succumbing to the red tape of the Military Authorities.¹⁶⁵ A letter

¹⁶⁰ Jack Fearnhead correspondence 18th December 1914

¹⁶¹ *Bootle Times* 1st January 1915 p.4

¹⁶² *Bootle Times* 8th January 1915 p.4

¹⁶³ *Bootle Times* 8th January 1915 p.4

¹⁶⁴ Jack Fearnhead correspondence 29th December 1914

¹⁶⁵ *Bootle Times* 22nd January 1915 p.4

of thanks from a man in 7th Battalion later appeared as leave for most was granted, though it was still refused to those who would not be inoculated.¹⁶⁶

This leave was the last time many of the men saw their families. Men continued to join the first group who had arrived in Romsey on Friday 4th September 1914, expecting to be sent to Egypt or India to replace Regular First Line troops who were coming back to fight in France.¹⁶⁷ The people of Romsey had soon made them feel at home, according to a letter from Colour Sergeant Ludlam G Company, who along with the rest of the Battalion was soon guarding railway stock, sidings, stations and bridges.¹⁶⁸ As well as route marches, once stationed at Canterbury different Companies were trained through guarding strategic installations such as harbours and railway stations nearby, at Whitstable, Eastbourne and Ramsgate.¹⁶⁹ Divisional commanders in France were later to question the usefulness of this 'training'.¹⁷⁰

For all the talk of Ireland, India or Egypt in the early days, their training and expectations turned to France. At the start of March they moved from Canterbury, to be replaced there by the advance parties of the 2/7th Battalion.¹⁷¹ The newspapers at home barely reported the fact that the Battalion had arrived safely in France on Sunday 7th March 1915.¹⁷² Private James Cook, No. 2388, 8 Platoon, B Company, just had time to record on a postcard for his family: 'Are in tents & it is very rough snow and rain falling... Very rough on this side of the Channel.'¹⁷³

It is clear that recruitment to 7th King's was of a generalised nature. It was not an ethnic - based battalion like the Liverpool Irish, nor one based on a certain proficiency such as the Rifles, nor was it made up of men solely from the same factory or company. It was a Battalion which recruited primarily from a geographical perspective and the evidence shows that in terms of numbers, it was almost 100% rooted in Southport and Bootle. Its closest comparison is with the locally raised Pals units and there is evidence of local identity being the most significant expression of their make-up.

¹⁶⁶ *Bootle Times* 12th February 1915 p.4

¹⁶⁷ *Southport Visiter* 8th September p.5; 10th September 1914 p.6

¹⁶⁸ *Southport Visiter* 12th September 1914 p.7

¹⁶⁹ Jack Farrington correspondence 27th January 1915

¹⁷⁰ WO95/590 I Corps War Diary, Major-General Horne report

¹⁷¹ *Southport Guardian* 3rd March 1915 p.5

¹⁷² *Southport Guardian* 10th March 1915 p.2

It is also possible to demonstrate that the Battalion reflected the social and economic structure of the area to a considerable degree, although there is a doubt about the extent of its engagement with Bootle's working and under class community. There is sufficient evidence to show that even at Company level, men were alongside men from quite different backgrounds and experiences. However, the nature of training of this disparate group was to be criticised later by Regular Army commanders and therefore their effectiveness as a combat unit in France would appear to rely on those diverse experiences and abilities almost as much as the development of a drilled disciplinary outfit.

Lusitania

Two key events in May 1915 proved significant in contributing towards a community identity in Bootle and Southport which was to last through and beyond the War, the sinking of the **Lusitania** and the battle of Festubert. While the **Lusitania** disaster holds some linkages with the Battalion's action at Festubert, as will be seen in the following chapter, it is the impact on the local community which proved to be a defining factor. The rioting which followed in its wake was the most significant of all the anti-German feeling seen at Home.¹⁷⁴ In particular, this was an important element in the establishment of women's identity in Bootle. While the passengers on Cunard's **Lusitania** came from a variety of places, many being American, the majority of her crew and stewards were Liverpool people. The justification for the attack on the **Lusitania** as a legitimate target of War is another debate.¹⁷⁵

The **Lusitania** was not the first ship to be sunk by the German submarine fleet, in fact twenty-five merchant ships and the liner, **Falaba**, had gone down between February and the end of March of that year.¹⁷⁶ The **Lusitania** had left Liverpool on 17th April, arriving in New York on the 24th, on her regular monthly round trip, returning from New York on 1st May.¹⁷⁷ On the afternoon of Friday, 7th May she was

¹⁷³ James Cook correspondence 8th March 1915

¹⁷⁴ Panayi "The Lancashire anti-German riots of May 1915" p.3-11

¹⁷⁵ Preston, D *Wilful murder: the sinking of the Lusitania* Corgi London 2003 is one of the most recent books on the subject.

¹⁷⁶ Simpson, C *Lusitania* Avid Publications Wirral 1996 p.83; Southport Guardian 31st March 1915 p.5; Liverpool Echo 28th May 1915

¹⁷⁷ Simpson *Lusitania* pp. 90,110

holed by torpedoes and sank off the coast of Ireland with the loss of 1,201 lives.¹⁷⁸ The news spread quickly and the first outbreak of what was to prove a wave of unrest and violence occurred in Liverpool the next day. It was reported that riots started in Walton Lane and then spread, although on the Saturday, they were mainly confined to the North End. They continued through the night and occurred again on Sunday, and on Monday 10th they spread, to Bootle, Birkenhead and Seacombe. The first riots in Manchester also occurred on the Monday.¹⁷⁹

Three theories about why the riots occurred were put forward at the time: that they were hunger riots, that they were simply a reaction to the sinking itself and that they were inspired and fuelled by the press reaction. Panayi has concluded that there was more to it than a simple response to the event, that there is no real evidence that they were hunger riots, and that the press reaction merely reported what was going on rather than inspired it.¹⁸⁰ For Panayi's conclusion to be challenged evidence is needed that the rioters read the papers which were most vociferous in their anti-German columns and that their reports for instance of so-called 'atrocities' inspired locals to vent their anger. An appraisal of local papers shows that this was not the case.

Primarily the argument for blaming an inflammatory press can be refuted on the basis of the timings of the publication of local papers. The *Bootle Times* came out on a Friday, so it was a full week before they could report anything about the sinking or the aftermath. Even then its reports were limited to anything which occurred up to Tuesday night, implying that it was written on Wednesday, printed on Thursday and sold on Friday.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the *Formby Times* and the *Crosby Herald* were published on a Saturday. The *Southport Guardian* came out twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, but the sinking happened too late to reach the editions of Saturday 8th May. The *Southport Visiter* was the first local paper able to print details of the disaster, and of the riots, as it came out on a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

If the riots were inspired by the press it must have been the national papers, and it would need to be those on Saturday 8th May or Monday 10th, to have had any effect in Merseyside. The **Lusitania** was hit on Friday 7th May at 2.10pm. In eighteen

¹⁷⁸ Simpson *Lusitania* p.9

¹⁷⁹ Panayi *The enemy in our midst* pp.237 - 238

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* pp. 229, 234 - 235

minutes she had sunk.¹⁸² The first announcement reached the newspaper offices in London around 4pm and the news was in late editions of the London papers.¹⁸³ Riots on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday, can only either have been spontaneous or dominated by local people who took the national papers. Evidence of circulation of such papers in Bootle at this time is non-existent. Riots broke out elsewhere too, even in Whitstable where Jack Fearnhead was guarding the harbour.¹⁸⁴

The role of rumour cannot be discounted altogether. Undoubtedly, the travelling soldiers, administrators and civilians would have been part of the dissemination of news of the tragedy. In the absence of any evidence it is not possible to establish the significance of this factor in reporting the news.

The riots may have been perpetuated by the national reporting fervour, but clearly the sparks of violence over that first weekend were the result of a pent-up reaction to Germany. In fact, the local editorials were censorious of the acts of rampage. On Friday 14th May, in his first opportunity to comment, the editor of the *Bootle Times* referred to the verdict of Monday's inquest into the disaster, held at Kinsale, which had found it 'Wilful murder', but he also wrote that the riots 'retard rather than advance our cause'. Emphasising where the energy should go, the editorial continued: 'the country wants soldiers not shopbreakers - keep the King's up to strength.'¹⁸⁵ The Tuesday edition of the *Southport Visiter* was indignant at this 'dastardly murder' and while reporting riots in London and Manchester in Thursday's paper, also reported Lord Derby's remarks that it was a 'senseless form of revenge', not to mention an 'extremely expensive one'. Derby stressed that the right form of retribution was to enlist in the Army.¹⁸⁶ One correspondent with Bootle MP, Andrew Bonar Law, expressed the fears of families with men held by the Germans as Prisoners of War, that their lives may be in jeopardy as a result of this 'foolish' and 'illegal' action. Bonar Law agreed with the need to stop the riots but also expressed the hope that one result would be that 'America may join us in the War.'¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ *Bootle Times* 14th May 1915

¹⁸² Simpson *Lusitania* pp.148, 150

¹⁸³ Simpson *Lusitania* p.170

¹⁸⁴ Jack Fearnhead correspondence 12th May 1915

¹⁸⁵ *Bootle Times* 14th May 1915 p.4

¹⁸⁶ *Southport Visiter* 11th May 1915 p.7 and 13th May 1915 p.7, *Southport Guardian* 12th May 1915

¹⁸⁷ 37/2/17 and 37/5/24, correspondence between James Graham Watson, Midlothian (12th May 1915) and Andrew Bonar Law MP (14th May 1915): Bonar Law MSS Vol.2

The *Bootle Times* reported the riots in detail. Between 150 and 200 shops were attacked on both sides of the Mersey and damage was calculated at up to £50,000. Saturday night violence was confined to Fischer's butchers in Walton Lane and Dimler's in County Road. Both shops were again attacked on Sunday, ransacking the upstairs living quarters. The paper called them 'patriotic pillagers'. George Vogel, who had four sons serving in the British Army, also had his shop wrecked. A fire was started at Franz and Co. sweet factory in Everton. On Monday the crowd moved on to Bootle, headed by 'shawled women'. The report continued: 'a confectioner's shop bearing a Teutonic name Smash! Crash! and the window was in smithereens. The crowd gave a cheer and cursed the Kaiser'.¹⁸⁸

The reports were ambivalent in their approach to the mob - creating a story of excitement from which can be drawn parallels with later reports of the action in France. There are references to the 'curious crowd', to the actions of a woman with an axe, and later, 'a new leader was discovered at the head of affairs in the form of a well-dressed young lady.' The item referred to the 'savage spirit' of the crowd. There was looting of butchers, confectioners, jewellers, and general destruction of furniture and fittings - a piano was brought out of one house in Hapsford Road 'and one of the crowd obliged with a few patriotic selections before the instrument was utterly destroyed.' There were some suggestions that on Monday there had been a 'plan of campaign', with different groups taking Stanley Road, Hawthorne Road and Derby Road but no other evidence of this has been found.¹⁸⁹

There were several references to women in the mob. One report claimed the trouble was started by women who had lost relatives in the disaster. Apparently, one of the women stood on a chair in Stanley Road and preached an eye for an eye. The newspaper thought it 'deplorable' that there were so many young girls in the crowd.¹⁹⁰ The involvement of women is borne out by an analysis of the court cases over the following few days. The Bootle magistrates dealt largely with theft and receiving, sitting on Saturday 15th and then a further three days the following week. Five women were convicted on Saturday, twenty-four women out of a total of thirty-two defendants on Monday, eighteen on Tuesday and another twelve on Wednesday - a total of 59 women from Bootle alone. Several of the defendants were only fifteen

¹⁸⁸ *Bootle Times* 14th May 1915 p.6

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

or sixteen years old. Of forty cases at Liverpool magistrates on Tuesday 18th May, the 'majority were women and a few young girls.' Fines ranged from five to forty shillings and there were a number of imprisonments, ranging from five to fourteen days, the women receiving the lighter punishments of five or seven days in prison, if they could not pay the fine.¹⁹¹

This predominance of women could support Sylvia Pankhurst's argument that these were riots in protest at the shortage of food. However, the nature of the charges reported in the local press shows that they were not targeting food shops. German butchers were attacked as being German, not for their food - although clearly any looter would not have turned down the opportunity. The majority of charges related to stealing other things - chairs, cushions, skirts, dolly tubs, prams, chests of drawers, mirrors, trays, pans, mattresses, tables, a sofa, clocks, jewellery, plates and saucers. And a piano lid.¹⁹² All this points to widespread but opportunistic and untargeted looting and certainly nothing to do with being a hunger riot. Nor were there any pronouncements by local suffragists on the matter.

As far as the Battalion was concerned, they went into battle at Festubert with the name **Lusitania** on their lips. There is no logical direct connection between the riots and the men attacking 'in the name of the Lusi' and their war cry may have been no less spontaneous than that of the rioters. An assertion in the *Bootle Times* of 21st May that the Battalion was also hit by the loss clearly referred to the news of the sinking rather than proving a causal link between the riots and the Battalion attack.¹⁹³

The institutional response to the sinking was perforce more restrained, dealing more in what could come out of the tragedy, but this too concentrated on the immediacy of the event and there is evidence that for many authorities the importance of the loss was shortlived. Litherland Council, meeting on Monday 10th May expressed sympathy for the relatives of those lost, but no mention was made of the disturbances.¹⁹⁴ Formby recorded its abhorrence at this 'wanton and murderous

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Bootle Times* 21st May 1915 p.6; 28th May 1915 p.2

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Bootle Times* 21st May 1915 p.4 - letter from Pte. J.Hughes, 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment

¹⁹⁴ LUD 7 Litherland Urban District Council Minutes 10th May 1915

deed.¹⁹⁵ The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, under the chairmanship of Lord Derby, passed a resolution expressing sympathy and condolence.¹⁹⁶ A Memorial Service was held at St.Peter's Church, Liverpool on Thursday 13th, attended by representatives from the local authorities, Cunard, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and a number of survivors and grieving relatives.¹⁹⁷ Towards the end of May, Bootle organised a Benefit Concert and a Mayor's Fund was set up to raise money for the relatives.¹⁹⁸ Most subsequent references in the press or in local council minutes concerned the riots and their costs.¹⁹⁹

Cunard eventually set up a Fund for a Motor Ambulance called the **Lusitania** and also a Number 2 Fund, as a **Lusitania** memorial. After the first six months grant expired - £400 - it was reported to the Board that there were still two ambulances operating at the Front in the name of the **Lusitania** so the grant was extended.²⁰⁰ Cunard also erected a war memorial outside its headquarters on the Pier Head, Liverpool, in 1921, dedicated to the men and women employed by the company who had been lost during the War, but made no other permanent contribution to the victims of the **Lusitania** in particular. They did pay a modest sum toward the upkeep of graves in Kinsale until 1926 and subsequently, as they fell into disrepair, desired to remove the Cunard name from the plot. It was left to an American Committee to pay for and erect a memorial to those lost in the disaster. Due to complications it was not unveiled until 1953, but with no involvement from Cunard.²⁰¹

The evidence from reports in the press and from Council meetings confirmed that the riots were a spontaneous outburst of anti-German feeling. Panayi's conclusion, that the riots were racist and anti-German, albeit within the context of spy hysteria and intolerance of aliens during a War situation, appears to be the most reliable one.²⁰² This may also have been locked into a build-up of antipathy, fuelled partly by publicity about German methods of warfare, particularly the gas attack at Ypres, and partly by

¹⁹⁵ UDFo 2/4/3 Formby Urban District Council Minutes 12th May 1915

¹⁹⁶ *Southport Guardian* 12th May 1915

¹⁹⁷ *Bootle Times* 28th May 1915 p.5

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Bootle Times* 21st May 1915 p.5

²⁰⁰ B4/46 Cunard Board Executive Committee Minutes 21st October 1915 Vol.46

²⁰¹ Wilton, D "Their name liveth"; analysing the approaches to First World War Remembrance using records in Liverpool and Worcester' Unpublished MARM thesis Liverpool University 1998 pp.8, 28, 29 and 32

²⁰² Panayi "The Lancashire anti-German riots of May 1915" pp.3-11

stories of atrocities in Belgium. At the same time as the reports of the sinking of the **Lusitania** were appearing in the papers, the *Southport Visiter* for one was carrying stories of these reported atrocities such as 'a sergeant of the Cheshires crucified to a tree with bayonets and a farm with one hundred wounded in it being blown down',²⁰³ and of questions in the Commons when the War Office denied any knowledge of three Canadians who had been similarly crucified with bayonets by the Germans.²⁰⁴

It may have been further fuelled by the tone and descriptions employed by the press, even in their condemnation of the rioting, as shown in the reports described above. As much as two weeks later the *Bootle Times* still referred to the cases before the courts as 'pilfering patriots'.²⁰⁵ Mostly, however, it was an opportunity for the local civilian population to feel part of the War, to show that they were physically involved as well as the Battalion. It provoked a rush to recruit in the local area which is not reported elsewhere in the country,²⁰⁶ further suggesting that this at least began as a very local, Merseyside reaction to a local tragedy. Derby and others did not lose the opportunity to promote a recruiting drive, as they did with subsequent attacks on the Western Front. Recruiting posters appeared with the phrase 'Avenge the **Lusitania**' well into 1916.²⁰⁷ There was even a brief suggestion that the surge in recruits in West Lancashire should be used to form a '**Lusitania** Battalion'.²⁰⁸

The sinking of the **Lusitania** may have raised questions about the ethical position Britain was taking in the use of its passenger liners to carry war munitions and supplies, but it certainly made the local community connected with Bootle and the docks feel a real part of the War. Coming as it did, coincidentally around the same time as the men in the 7th Battalion were in their first attack on the enemy, May 1915 marked a turning point in the relationship between the Battalion and the home communities, forging a bond of identity and community which continued after the War had ended.

Conclusion

²⁰³ *Southport Visiter* 11th May 1915 p.8 letter from Private CC Jopling 6th Northumberland Fusiliers, convalescing at the Grange, Southport

²⁰⁴ *Southport Visiter* 13th May 1915 p.6

²⁰⁵ *Bootle Times* 28th May 1915 p.2

²⁰⁶ *Bootle Times* 14th May 1915 p.8 reported that recruiting in the previous week had surpassed previous figures and 'over sixty have joined in the last week'

²⁰⁷ *Southport Guardian* 12th May 1915 p.8; Simpson **Lusitania** p.18

²⁰⁸ *Southport Guardian* 12th May 1915 p.8

The short period from August 1914 to May 1915 provided a swift learning curve for the men of 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment and their local communities. The communities of south west Lancashire provided men for the ranks and, despite the diversity of the area, there was a strong sense of identity and belonging to these communities. Outside of war it was possible to identify with a number of different elements in their lives. As the War brought these men together into a combat unit, the common sense of identity had to become the prevailing one. Evidence is provided later in the thesis of ways in which this developed, although it will be argued that the single most significant aspect to it was the Battle of Festubert, studied below.

The creation of a single sense of identity for the Battalion was something to which the local communities contributed a good deal too. As the range of these communities were reflected in the Battalion, so the many different elements were able to find a voice within the ranks. The prime element was the direct link provided by having a member of the family in the Battalion. This quickly developed, however, into a community link so that the Battalion enshrined that community's perspective of the War within it. It was the 7th Battalion which was most important, which received the attention from funds and comforts, and it was the 7th Battalion which the local newspapers used to mark the progress of the War. As will be seen subsequently, the most important events in the War for the local papers were those where they were able to cite local involvement. Although this included almost any local interest, it revolved around the fortunes of the local Battalion.

For the Battalion to operate most effectively it had to relegate individual identities and concerns in favour of the greater whole. Occasionally these surfaced, although never to any great detriment to the Unit. The local community had to perform a similar act. Political and industrial unrest and conflict, prevalent in the years and months leading up to August 1914, had to be put aside if the community was to effectively support and enthuse the War effort. That it did so quite quickly was a testament to the many organisations and agencies who rallied to the common cause. In many ways, the local communities had a much harder job to maintain this commonality, particularly as the years went on. They were geographically as well as socially disparate, unlike the compact nature of an Army unit. Neither could they do very much in terms of physically affecting the course of the War. Arguably, nor could the ordinary soldier but at least he could engage the enemy. The communities at Home had to find some alternative means to engage the enemy such as that which arose in May 1915 when

the **Lusitania** was sunk. The violent response to this event, spontaneous at first, was then perpetuated by the publicity which it generated. Despite the moral outrage and concern, the reaction by press and magistrates lacked real conviction and even gave some implicit encouragement to the rioters and their behaviour.

Inevitably, with such huge numbers of men away from the town, women became an increasingly important element in society. But society did not appear to know how to react to this development. Councils and local agencies continued to be run by old men, beyond active service age, although women were more involved in some of the sub-committees. Like representatives of labour, however, they were kept away from the crucial decisions. Women were urged to knit and raise funds for the soldiers with even previously militant women's groups organising sewing circles. Women were also treated as victims of the War, firstly as economic dependents and then, as casualties mounted, as tragic ones. In relation to the billeted troops in town, they were also seen as both vulnerable and predatory. They needed protection from the large numbers of available men about to go to a War from which they may not return and, at the same time, they were patrolled to keep them off the streets and away from the evil drink. New licensing laws gave an opportunity for the local establishment to link the perils of drink with the perils of men and to blame women, especially working class women, for a number of problems. Ironically, the opportunities for more drink and generally more independent behaviour were created not specifically by the absence of their husbands, but more by their introduction to a new world of work.

The period between August 1914 and May 1915 is one when the communities of Bootle and Southport established their principal links with the War and 'their' Battalion. While disparate communities in themselves, they were united in their focus of attention on 7th King's. As will be seen, the Battalion reflected this need for a sense of belonging to the community and this became increasingly important for their morale and effectiveness.



A Kingsman at the Park Street Depot, Bootle, 1914.

Photo. courtesy Philip Haythornwaite



The York House Hotel, Eastbourne – one of the many establishments employed for billeting men from the 7th King's.

*Postcard photograph.
c. 1896*



Left and below:
Men from 7th
King's in billets,
1914/15.

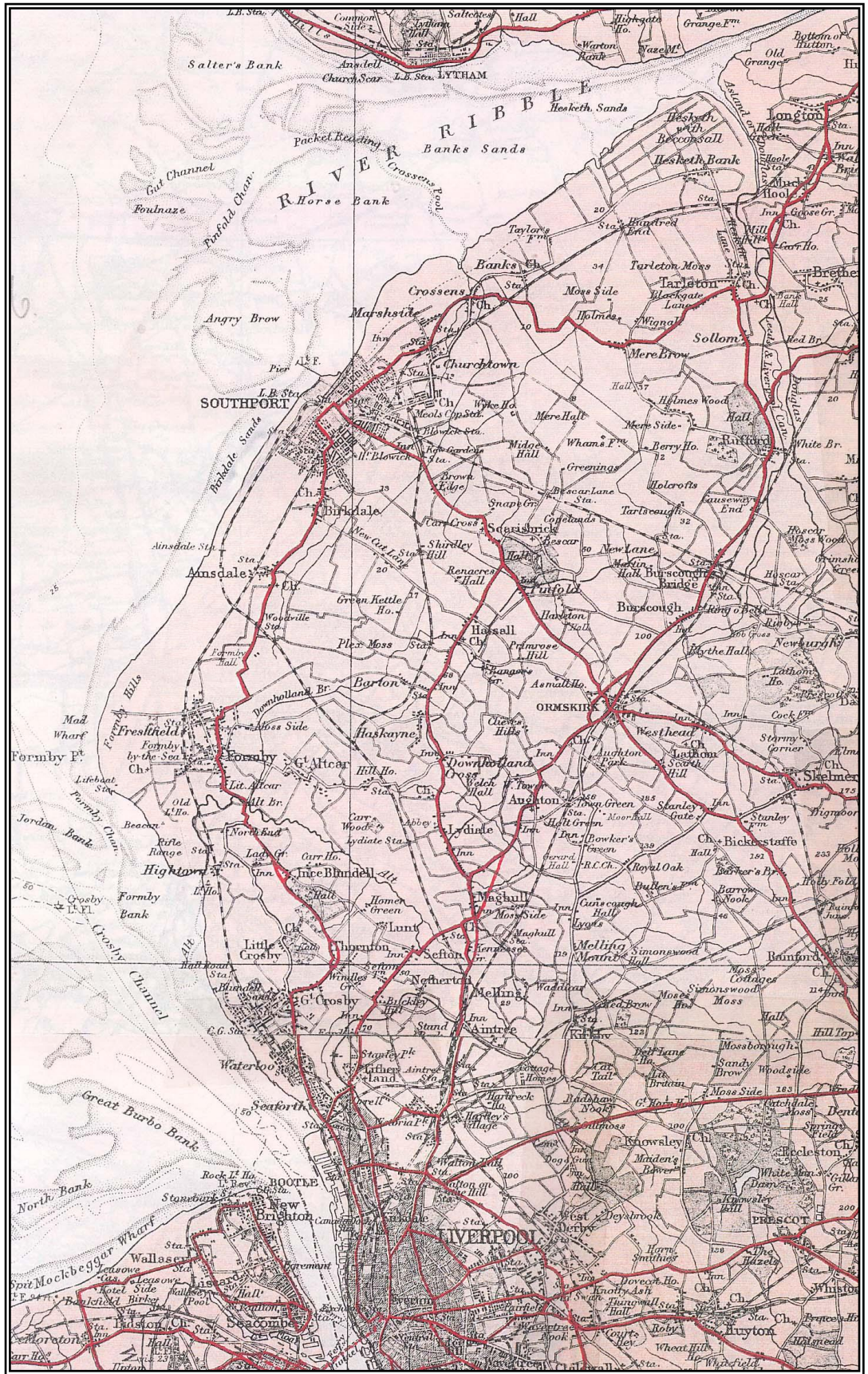
*Photographs
courtesy of Peter
Threlfall*





Three photos. of 7th Kingsmen billeted 1914/15. Photographs courtesy of Peter Threlfall





Map of the relevant area of south west Lancashire, extracted from Collins' Road Atlas n.d.[1930's]